DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 494 PS 016 297

AUTHOR Holle, Kimberly Ann
TITLE Age-Related Parenting Education: Model Development and Application to an Emerging Family Constellation - Single-by-Choice Mothers.
PUB DATE May 86
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Building Family Strengths Conference (9th, Lincoln, NE, May, 1986) and at the Annual Parenting Symposium (2nd, Philadelphia, PA, February, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Rearing; Models; *Mothers; *One Parent Family; *Parent Education; Program Development; *Social Support Groups
IDENTIFIERS *Single by Choice Mothers; Theory Development

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to describe an adaptation of the Schaefer Circumplex Model to age-related parenting theory and techniques, and (2) to illustrate its application in relation to the emerging numbers of single-by-choice mothers. The method described superimposes both a child's and a parent's cognitive and psychosocial timelines onto the Schaefer Circumplex Model, assigning appropriate parenting styles and techniques to the corresponding cognitive and psychosocial stages of the child. The application of the developmental parenting process model to the mentoring process practiced by a support group for mothers who were single by choice illustrates the model's usefulness and highlights its appropriateness for this particular parenting population. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED278494

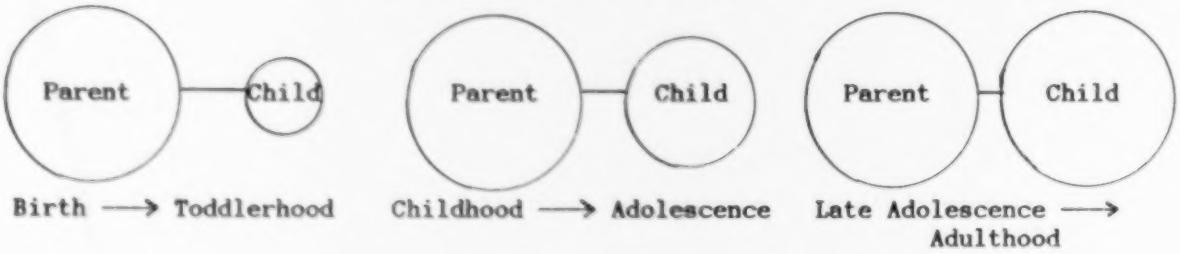
Age-Related Parenting Education: Model Development and Application to an Emerging Family Constellation - Single-by-Choice Mothers

Kimberly Ann Holle

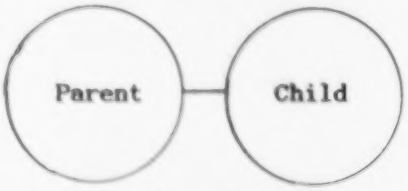
Graduate Student, Department of Family Relations and Human Development
The Ohio State University
Member, Single Mothers of Columbus, Ohio

There is a need for providing parents, especially single-by-choice mothers, with available and inexpensive age-related parenting information so they can cope constructively with the changing needs of their developing children and reap personal benefits from this experience. Good parenting is defined as a process composed of several styles, incorporating appropriate parental control as a child matures and a high level of love.

Control Dimension Illustrated



Love Dimension Illustrated



"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kimberly Ann Holle
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 016297

The method described in this paper superimposes both a child's and a parent's cognitive and psychosocial time lines onto the Schaefer Circumplex Model, assigning the appropriate parenting styles and techniques to the correspondent cognitive and psychosocial stages of the child. The application of this model to the mentoring process practiced by one single-by-choice mothering support group illustrates its usefulness and highlights its appropriateness for this particular parenting population.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Family structures and the accompanying family roles related to work and parenting are expanding and changing. Time and energy is at a premium; job responsibilities, home responsibilities, marital responsibilities, and parental responsibilities can create an enormous amount of pressure on parents and additional adjustments for children. The stressors are numerous, yet traditional nuclear family units have adult teams that, for the most part, share the responsibilities in some manner.

An emerging family structure, however, generally overlooked when considering these contemporary family modifications is the family headed by a "single-by-choice mother", a modern adaptation for women desiring children, but not marriage, and in response to the "marriage squeeze." The stressors in these family units are numerous also and, since the burdens are borne by one head of household, are intensified as well. What are the stresses on these women and how do they cope? How do they differ from other single-parent populations? How do they view their role as a parent?

Aside from expensive counseling or extensive individual research, there are few (a) easily accessible and effective support groups, and no (b) readily available and inexpensive summaries of "age-related parenting" which encompass the methods outlined in popular parenting books, and cognitive and psychosocial developmental stages, for single-by-choice mothers prior to the birth of their children. The lack of these resources is felt quite keenly by this single-by-choice population as these women search for information in a decision-making process that is crucial to their welfare and that of their children.

---

*Major portions of this paper appeared in the Annual Meeting Proceedings of the Ohio Council on Family Relations, 1985.

**This paper was presented at the Second Annual Parenting Symposium in Philadelphia during February, 1986, and at the Ninth Annual Building Family Strengths Conference at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln during May, 1986.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is two-fold:

(1) To describe the author's adaptation of the Schaefer Circumplex Model to age-related parenting theory and techniques; and,

(2) To illustrate its application in relation to the emerging numbers of single-by-choice mothers.

Development of Model

During this author's professional course of study in parenting theory and techniques, acquaintance with the standard theoretical approaches of parenting (behavioral, socioteleological, and existential-phenomenological) was made, although none were perceived as developmentally comprehensive. Introduction to the concept of age-related parenting occurred as well and it was accepted as a valuable concept, although no visual models of it existed. Exposure to several parenting models presented parenting in a static manner (i.e., a point on a model); none demonstrated a developmental process approach. The Schaefer Circumplex Model (Schaefer, 1971), which utilizes two dimension continua determined to be present in all parent-child interactions, however, demonstrated potential in constructing a visual developmental parenting process model consistent with the concept of age-related parenting.

The Schaefer Circumplex Model was hypothesized based on factor analyses of the maternal behavior ratings derived from recorded observations of maternal behavior in the Berkeley Growth Study (Schaefer, 1971). The love/hostility axis is appropriately designated as a vertical measurement continuum (i.e., "high" versus "low" love), while the axis showing possessive control to autonomy is best designated as a progression axis from

left to right. In Figure 1, parenting characteristics are plotted and the resultant child behaviors are listed for each quadrant of the model (degree of child behavior is dependent on the extreme location of the parenting characteristics on each axis and the consequent meeting point within the quadrant). The experts' designated best locus of functioning as a parent is starred (O'Bryant, 1984).

After reevaluation of the concepts projected by the Schaefer Circumplex Model, possibilities for interpreting it, with some modification, as a developmental process model were evident. The child behaviors listed in the upper left quadrant were seen to be the behaviors associated with the early cognitive and psychosocial developmental stages of children, and the parenting characteristics were seen as appropriate to those stages (i.e., an infant is dependent and a parent should be protective-indulgent; a child is a cultural blank slate and a parent should model conformity in teaching cultural norms). On the other hand, the child behaviors listed in the upper right quadrant were viewed as the behaviors associated with the tasks of later cognitive and psychosocial developmental stages of children, and the parenting characteristics were seen as appropriate to those stages (i.e., an adolescent needs to learn independence and a parent should be cooperative and democratic). In order to illustrate this more clearly, in Figure 2 the cognitive and psychosocial developmental time lines of a child were superimposed on the model at a high level of love, serving as the focus of consistency, and moving from left to right demonstrating the relinquishing of control as the effective unifying theme in attaining a positive outcome in child behavior (i.e., non-conformity, creativity, independence, leadership,

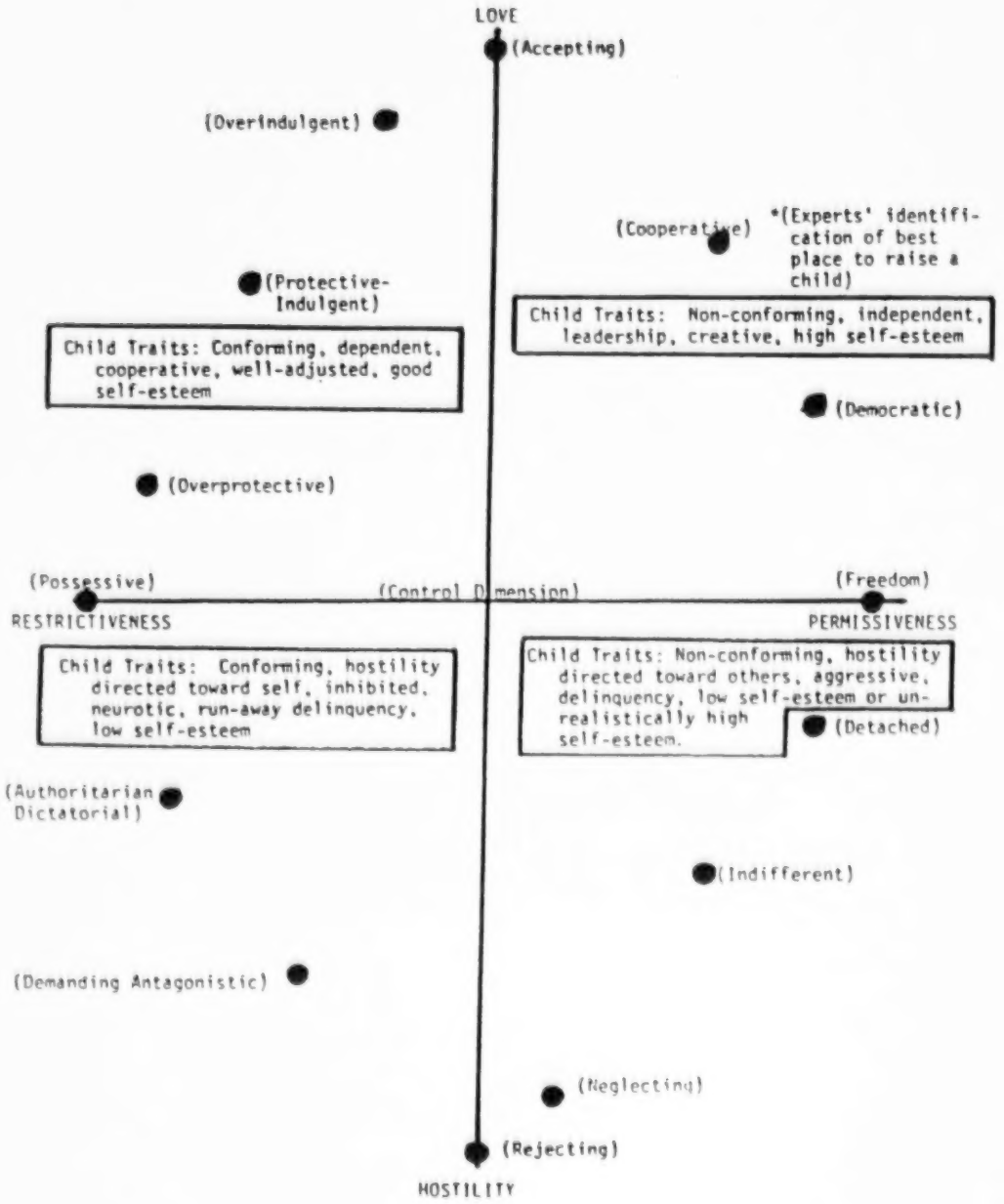


Figure 1. [From "A Circumplex Model for Maternal Behavior" by Earl S. Schaefer, in Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 1959, 59, pp. 226-235. (Copyright 1959 by the American Psychological Association.) Reprinted by permission of the publisher.]

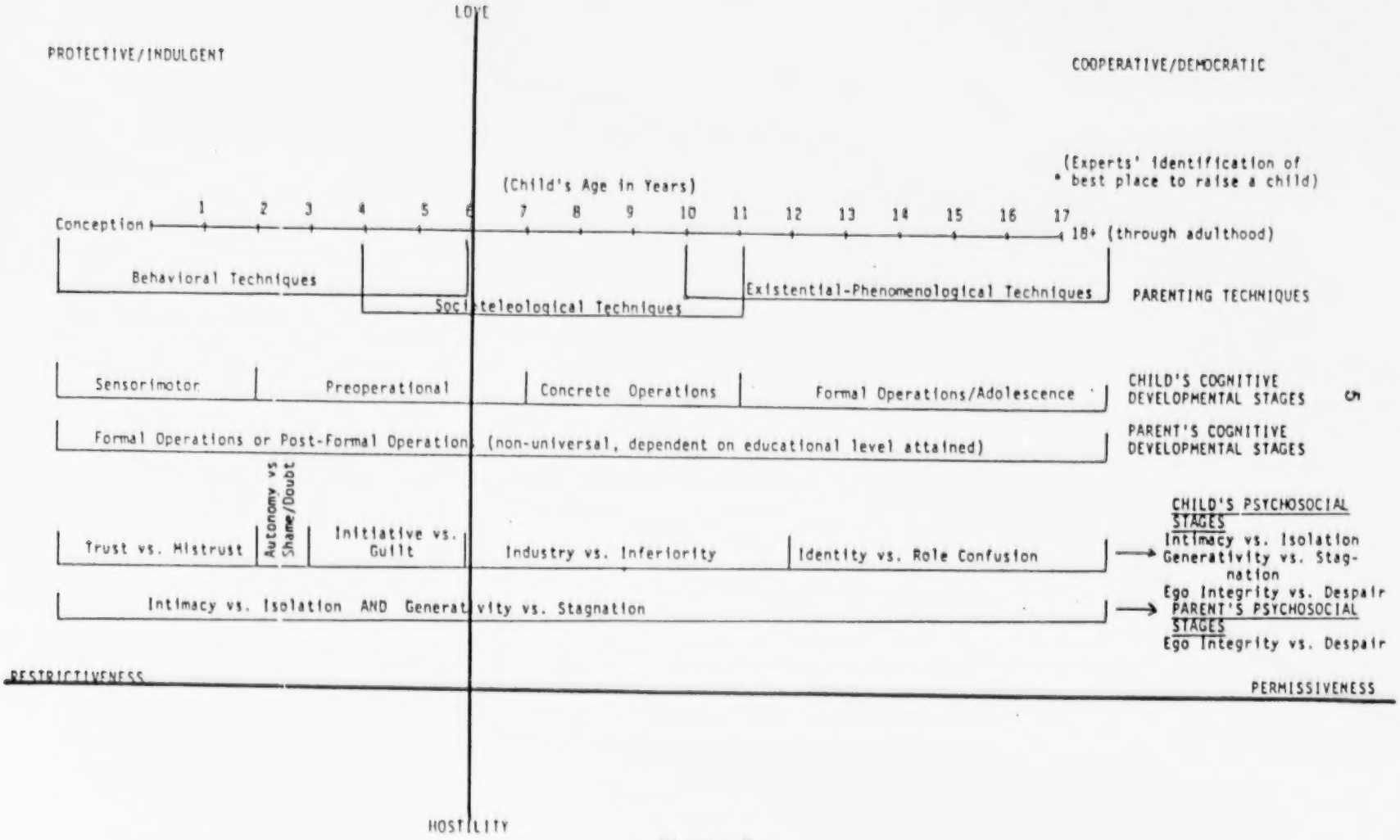


Figure 2.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

self-esteem) at the conclusion of the high intensity period of parenting reponsibility (to the end of adolescence and into young adulthood).

The parent's corresponding cognitive and psychosocial stages were also superimposed on the Circumplex Model to suggest that this reinterpretation is applicable to parental needs as well by providing parental benefits related to their corresponding developmental stages. These benefits include, among others, increasing freedom from constant monitoring of child behavior during maturation, possession of an invaluable guide to evaluating childcare arrangements, increasing freedom from total responsibility for decision-making, and a greater degree of satisfaction and less emotional intensity at the launching phase. It is also a time and energy saving approach for parents in realizing that parenting is a time of growth for them too and that they are not confined to a rigid set of "rules" for twenty years in attempting to produce an adequate finished product.

Subsequent to constructing Figure 2, an appropriate meshing of three popular parenting styles (behavioral, socio-teleological, and existential-phenomenological) with the stages of cognitive and psychosocial development was performed to maintain proper parental relinquishment of control as the unifying theme with a high degree of love as the parental focus of consistency. The three parenting styles were added to Figure 2 to illustrate their application to the developmental time lines of children and parents. Figure 3 was then constructed to further delineate the stage relevant child characteristics and associated parenting techniques and behaviors. It is the "unique social interactions" and the "interaction with the environment" in connection with parenting that is of major concern here. These unique social

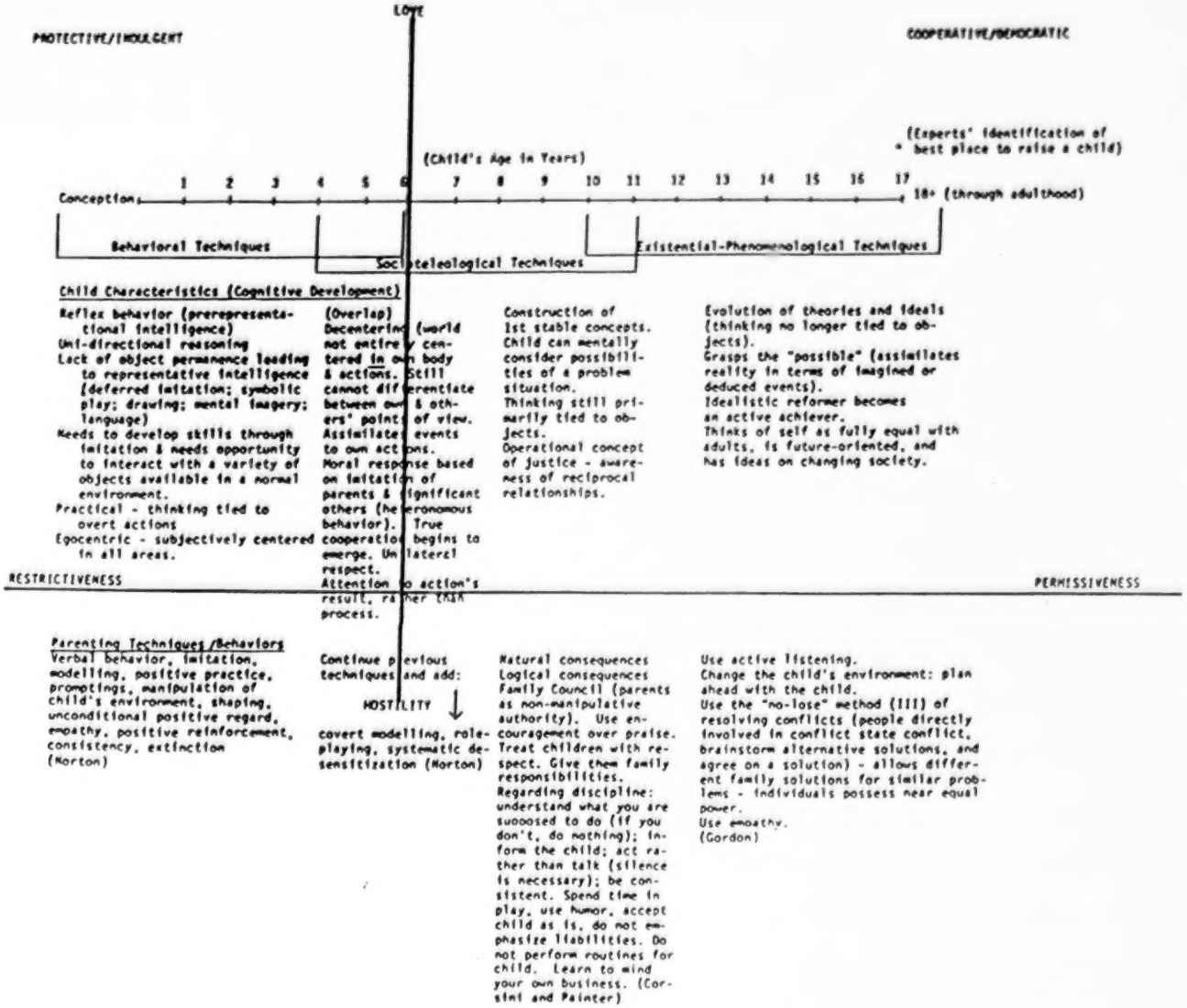

LOVE
PROTECTIVE/INDULGENT
COOPERATIVE/DEMOCRATIC
(Experts' identification of best place to raise a child)
(Child's Age in Years)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
Conception
18+ (through adulthood)
Behavioral Techniques
Existential-Phenomenological Techniques
Sociteleological Techniques
Child Characteristics (Cognitive Development)
Reflex behavior (prerepresentational intelligence)
Uni-directional reasoning
Lack of object permanence leading to representative intelligence (deferred imitation; symbolic play; drawing; mental imagery; language)
Needs to develop skills through imitation & needs opportunity to interact with a variety of objects available in a normal environment.
Practical - thinking tied to overt actions
Egocentric - subjectively centered in all areas.
(Overlap)
Decentering (world not entirely centered in own body & actions. Still cannot differentiate between own & others' points of view. Assimilates events to own actions. Moral response based on imitation of parents & significant others (heteronomous behavior). True cooperation begins to emerge. Unilateral respect. Attention to action's result, rather than process.
Construction of 1st stable concepts. Child can mentally consider possibilities of a problem situation. Thinking still primarily tied to objects. Operational concept of justice - awareness of reciprocal relationships.
Evolution of theories and ideals (thinking no longer tied to objects). Grasps the "possible" (assimilates reality in terms of imagined or deduced events). Idealistic reformer becomes an active achiever. Thinks of self as fully equal with adults, is future-oriented, and has ideas on changing society.
RESTRICTIVENESS
PERMISSIVENESS
Parenting Techniques/Behaviors
Verbal behavior, imitation, modelling, positive practice, promptings, manipulation of child's environment, shaping, unconditional positive regard, empathy, positive reinforcement, consistency, extinction (Horton)
Continue previous techniques and add:
HOSTILITY
covert modelling, role-playing, systematic desensitization (Horton)
Natural consequences
Logical consequences
Family Council (parents as non-manipulative authority). Use encouragement over praise. Treat children with respect. Give them family responsibilities. Regarding discipline: understand what you are supposed to do (if you don't, do nothing); inform the child; act rather than talk (silence is necessary); be consistent. Spend time in play, use humor, accept child as is, do not emphasize liabilities. Do not perform routines for child. Learn to mind your own business. (Corsini and Painter)
Use active listening.
Change the child's environment: plan ahead with the child.
Use the "no-lose" method (III) of resolving conflicts (people directly involved in conflict state conflict, brainstorm alternative solutions, and agree on a solution) - allows different family solutions for similar problems - individuals possess near equal power.
Use empathy.
(Gordon)

Figure 3.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

interactions with parents should be based on education, education that is attained prior to the child's birth.

Application to the Single-by-Choice Mother Population

A "single-by-choice mother" can be defined as a woman who makes an educated, planned, and/or deliberate decision to have a child out-of-wedlock as a positive and viable lifestyle, and who bears the total (or the majority) of the financial, household, and childrearing responsibilities of the family unit.

Statistics concerning single-by-choice mothers are virtually nonexistent. Research in the literature is sparse. Numbers of single women heading families in the work force are available, but these figures also reflect circumstances resulting from divorce, widowhood, and accidental teenage pregnancies. It is enough, for the purposes of this application, to comment that this parent population is sufficiently widespread to warrant a New York based organization, Single Mothers by Choice, which publishes the Single Mothers by Choice Newsletter: Support and Information which boasts a nationwide circulation. Constraints of the single-by-choice-mother family unit and needs for educated decision-making have been selectively gleaned from the general research on families headed by single mothers tempered by the author's personal experiences as a single-by-choice mother and involvement in the Columbus, Ohio, organization serving this group of women.

The problems single-by-choice mothers face in parenting encompass five main areas:

(1) The first and foremost is the responsibility of raising a child alone. Not only does the woman have to contend with the range of roles inherent in this experience, but she deals with all of them at the most intense level possible. The remaining spheres of stress and constraints naturally flow from this first one.

(2) Managing a household comprises the second problem area. Not only do priorities have to be rearranged (i.e., what gets cleaned first and what can wait), but standards of cleanliness may need to be lowered (i.e., the length of time spent cleaning versus the importance of other time commitments) (Napolitane, 1977, as quoted in Jones, 1984). Dual-career parents face this dilemma also, but can, more often than single-by-choice mothers, afford to hire cleaning help to come into the home.

(3) Holding down a job or pursuing a career and/or an education, although a major source of self-esteem and fulfillment, is a major stress component in the life of a single-by-choice mother. Money and fringe benefit considerations often preclude even the thought of part-time work. Child care and supervision is a necessary concern. The social structure of the work environment is frustrating, also, since office socializing generally occurs during evening hours (housekeeping and child care is rarely sacrificed for this) (Jones, 1984).

(4) The one problem area that perhaps consciously grates the nerves of the women in this population more than any other is the abundance and nature of stereotypes of the single-by-choice mother. The majority of them are not on welfare (and the few that are on welfare are pursuing college educations), are not lesbians, do not hate men, and are not

physically or psychologically deviant (i.e., "unable" to maintain intimate adult relationships).

(5) Finally, single-by-choice mothers experience anxiety and depression, although the rates in comparison to other marital status groups is not known. It is known that single mothers through divorce and widowhood have higher rates of anxiety and depression than other marital status groups (Jones, 1984). Single-by-choice mothers, however, are single parents through deliberate and planned decisions and not by unexpected traumatic upheavals in lifestyle. In fact, some of the very personality characteristics building the foundations for this choice of lifestyle may also serve as anxiety alleviators. As stated by Welburn in Postnatal Depression (1980):

> When she is confronted with pregnancy, a woman not only changes within her body, she also has to come to terms with cultural and personal assumptions of which previously she may have been blithely unaware. Her adjustment to childbearing will depend on her expectations of herself as a mother and her ability to adapt the role to her own needs (p. 22).
>
> Those women who are most adjusted to childbearing are those who are less enslaved by the experience, have more differentiated, more open appraisals of themselves and other people, do not aspire to be the perfect selfless mother which they might have felt their own mother had not been but are able to call on a good mother image with which they can identify, and do not experience themselves as passive, the cultural stereotype of femininity (p. 23).
>
> Education in the processes and sensations of pregnancy and labour can help us to feel actively in control of what is happening, not just a passive body being delivered. This sense of activity is important if we are to adjust well to motherhood (p. 25).

It is the belief that education, in a broad sense, leads to a sense of activity, and consequently the feeling of some control over what is

happening. This idea is important to the process of adjusting to motherhood and is evident in the application of the visual process model of age-related parenting described previously. How will this particular concise informational format play a role in the education and decision-making of single-by-choice mothers? This process can best be illustrated by the description and adaptation of the employment mentoring process of single mothers through divorce and widowhood as presented by Hulse and Sours (1984). As stated by Hulse and Sours:

> While acknowledging the positive impact of supportive services to single mothers (e.g., counseling, support/personal growth groups, structured workshops, resource listings, contact persons, and child-care information and services), ... a missing link to the ultimate effectiveness of these traditional efforts is the presence of mentors or role models.

The use of mentors, or role models, is a necessary and effective source of information and support during decision-making prior to conception, during pregnancy, and after childbirth for the women involved in the Columbus, Ohio, group of single-by-choice mothers. The role of the mentor is to (a) correct erroneous assumptions about the success of single mothering (it is not inexplicable; it is a systematic movement through a progression of steps, each building on one another); and (b) instilling confidence that it is possible to be effective in simultaneous multiple roles (Hulse & Sours, 1984). The initial implicit messages the mentor must impart are: (a) concrete techniques that can be used in each phase of becoming a single-by-choice mother (e.g., the concise, illustrated, age-related parenting techniques delineated in the developmental model to be used during decision-making and actual childrearing); (2) the pertinent personal

problems experienced by the mentor and explicating how they were overcome; and (3) assurances of present and future support (informational and emotional) (Hulse & Sours, 1984). The organization in its entirety then focuses on personal growth, general problem-solving, and coping skills as an ongoing component of the process (Hulse & Sours, 1984). In the absence of strong extended family relationships for the single-by-choice mother, this group support is vital for success. With the emphasis shifted from the traditional nuclear family orientation, some sense of external "family" should be maintained.

Two elements regarding the presentation of the developmental parenting information remained as prominent concerns during this evaluation: (a) the focus on the mother (parent), as well as the child:

> Advice aimed at altering maternal behavior without taking account of the mother's needs and emotions is doomed to failure (Welburn, 1980, p. 24);

and, (b) the timing of information introduction. Hulse and Sours (1984) stated it succinctly regarding their employment mentoring model, but the terminology reflects the introduction of parenting techniques as well, if not more appropriately. Present it "during the early phase [decision-making] and when it is time for the final push...."

References

Briggs, Dorothy Corkille (1975). Your child's self-esteem. Garden City, NY: Dolphin Books.

Corsini, Raymond J. & Painter, Genevieve (1975). The practical parent: ABCs of child discipline. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Dalton, Katharina (1980). Depression after childbirth. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Essa, Eva (1983). A practical guide to solving preschool behavior problems. U.S.A.: Delmar Publishers, Inc..

Gordon, Thomas (1985). P.E.T.: Parent effectiveness training. New York: New American Library.

Hendrick, Joanne (1984). The whole child: Early education for the eighties (3rd ed.). St. Louis: Times Mirror/Mosby College Publishing.

Hulse, Diana & Sours, Diana (1984). Multiple mentoring with single mothers. Journal of Employment Counseling, 21, 11-17.

Jones, Sherrill C. (1984). Going to work: A challenge time for single mothers. Journal of Employment Counseling, 21, 7-10.

Mead, D. Eugene (1976). Six approaches to child rearing: Models from psychological theory. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Norton, G. (1977). Parenting. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

O'Bryant, Shirley (1984). Lecture notes from FM&HU DV 665. The Ohio State University: Columbus, Ohio.

Schaefer, Earl S. (1959). A Circumplex Model for Maternal Behavior. Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 59, 226-235.

Schaefer, Earl S. (1971) Development of hierarchical, configurational models for parent behavior and child behavior. In John P. Hill (ed.), Minnesota symposia on child psychology, vol. 5. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Welburn, Vivienne C. (1980). Postnatal depression. London: Manchester University Press.

Yussen, Steven R. & Santrock, John W. (1982). Child development: An introduction (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Co..